

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

**March 4, 2014: 5:30 p.m.
Committee Room #2, City Hall (511 Royal Avenue)**

MINUTES

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy	- Chair
Norah Andrew	- Community Member
Ashley Currie	- School District No. 40 Representative
Briana Tomkinson	- Community Member
Lillian Whitmore	- Community Member
Nadine Nakagawa	- Community Member
Patrick Johnstone	- Community Member
Richard Dolmat	- Community Member
Susan Zygmunt	- Community Member

REGRETS:

Chinu Das	- Community Member
Judith Hockney	- Fraser Health Representative

STAFF:

John Stark	- Senior Social Planner
Tristan Johnson	- Planning Analyst
Alison Worsfold	- Recording Clerk

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

1.0 ANNUAL HOUSEKEEPING

1.1 Committee Oaths

Alison Worsfold, Committee Clerk, administered the Oath of Office to the Committee members.

1.2 Orientation

Alison Worsfold, Committee Clerk, distributed and reviewed the following documents with the Committee members:

- Rules of Conduct: Advisory Committees & Bodies of Council
- Social Media Policy

- Terms of Reference
- Permission Forms

Members are to contact Ms. Worsfold regarding attendance at each meeting. If a member is unable to fulfill their duties, they are asked to notify staff as soon as possible so the position can be refilled.

2.0 ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

There were no additions.

3.0 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Adoption of the Minutes of January 7, 2014

MOVED and SECOND

THAT the minutes of the Community and Social Issues Committee meeting held January 7, 2014 be adopted.

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

4.0 PRESENTATIONS

4.1 New Westminster's Approach to Homelessness

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding New Westminster's approach to homelessness and outlined the following points:

- Statistics demonstrate that the homelessness situation in New Westminster has improved since Council recognized the need to address the issue in 2006;
- Between 2008 and 2011, the unsheltered homeless population decreased by 46% in New Westminster;
- The solutions to improve the homelessness situation included:
 - A continuum of housing, which included the Russell Housing Centre, the Rhoda Kaellis Residence, the Maria Keary Cottages, and the Elizabeth Fry Society;
 - A housing first model; and,
 - The collaboration between the City and BC Housing that established emergency shelters and longer-term transitional and supported housing for the homeless.
- The New Westminster Homelessness Coalition was established to develop and implement the Homelessness Action Strategy and includes representation from over 25 organizations;

- The 2014 Regional Homelessness count will take place on March 11 and 12, 2014;
- The goal of the questionnaire is to allow service providers to target their interventions; and,
- It was advised that if any Committee members are interested in serving as a volunteer enumerator for the 2014 Regional Homelessness count, that they should contact Linda Asgeirsson at 604-517-1703 or linda103@telus.net.

Discussion ensued and the following comments were noted:

- New Westminster homeless shelters are all currently at full capacity and typically maintain waitlists;
- The City works with service providers, such as the Union Gospel Mission, to provide services to the homeless;
- The Elizabeth Fry Society is flexible with respect to the duration of time women are allowed to stay at the facility, depending on their circumstances;
- It was suggested that women could be underreported in the homeless count, as a lot of them are 'couch surfers';
- Concerns were expressed regarding limited resources for homeless youth;
- The government provides rent subsidies to low-income people residing in market rental housing; however, it was suggested that there are an inadequate number of subsidies to avoid homelessness;
- Agencies, such as Progressive Housing Society, act as a liaison between tenants and landlords under certain circumstances;
- It was suggested that homeless people typically have bad credit and references, which act as barriers for them to get into the housing market; and,
- It was suggested that a detailed study should be conducted with respect to the reduction in crime in relation to the amount of homeless people living on the street during the past years.

5.0 UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5.1 Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, provided the following details regarding the New Westminster Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy, and highlighted the following information:

- The City has been interested in investigating family friendly housing options for the past several years;
- The City is currently looking at how New Westminster compares to other municipalities throughout Metro Vancouver;

- In March 2013, the Society for Children and Youth of BC approached the City regarding its interest in an initiative termed 'Municipal Strategies for Implementing Child and Youth Friendly Communities';
 - The project will create an overarching Child and Youth Friendly Community Strategy for New Westminster; and,
 - The strategy will act as a template for other municipalities and will be presented at the 2015 Cities *Fit for Children* conference.
- A Child and Youth Friendly Community is defined as one that upholds child rights as detailed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- One of the goals of the strategy is to maintain or increase enrollment in our local schools;
- Local families will be involved in the development of the strategy;
- There will be different parent and youth surveys that will be distributed city-wide;
- There will be a class assignment developed for younger students to complete with respect to a Child and Youth Friendly Community; and,
- Tristan Johnson, Planning Analyst, will be completing a city-wide profile in order to break down the housing statistics.

Tristan Johnson, Planning Analyst, noted the following:

- A pilot survey has been completed at New Westminister Family Place that indicates that there are concerns with respect to affordable housing;
- It was suggested that social isolation is a major factor and that people do not feel connected to their neighbours;
- The strategy process will include researching policies adopted by other cities throughout Metro Vancouver and BC to gather ideas for New Westminister;
- The Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia attended the River Market Festival and conducted an exercise with local children and youth;
- The findings of the exercise will be brought back to the Committee at the May 6, 2014 meeting; and,
- Statistics Canada will provide the City with family friendly housing data specifically at the city-wide levels.

Discussion ensued and the following comments were noted:

- Concerns were expressed regarding affordability, specifically in regards to families being unable to afford three-plus bedroom houses in New Westminister;
- It was suggested that an increase in the housing supply of three-plus bedroom units could cap a price increase;
- It was suggested that Council takes a communicative approach to re-zoning and development applications; and,

- It was suggested that the City keep including families in community plans and that in order to create diverse communities, the City should encourage residential development with multiple bedroom counts.

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

6.1 24-Hour Regional Homelessness Count

The Item was considered with Item 4.1.

6.2 Official Community Plan Update

John Stark, Senior Social Planner, provided the following update regarding the Official Community Plan (OCP):

- The City is currently undertaking an OCP update;
- The update is an 18 month process;
- A section in the OCP includes Individual and Community Well-being; and
- The section will be regularly brought forward to the Committee for feedback and input.

Tristan Johnson, Planning Analyst, advised that part of the work includes researching current policies that are already included in the City's OCP that could be brought forward into the new plan, and policies that are included in other municipalities' OCP's throughout British Columbia that the City would like to adopt.

7.0 REPORTS AND INFORMATION

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the following items be received for information:

7.1 2014 Homeless Count Draft Terms of Reference

7.2 New Westminster Shelter, Transitional and Supported Housing

CARRIED.

All members of the Committee present voted in favour of the motion.

8.0 CORRESPONDENCE

There were no items.

9.0 NEXT MEETING

The Committee advised that they would like to partake in a tour of the various homeless shelters throughout New Westminster.

Next Meeting: **May 6, 2014; 5:30 p.m. Committee Room #2**

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting concluded at 7:30 p.m.

Certified correct,

Councillor J. McEvoy
Chair

Alison Worsfold
Recording Clerk